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## THE JEWISH IMMIGRANT AS AN INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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Jews have been in this country since its beginning, but they had not been numerous enough to be regarded as a distinct economic factor until after the Russian persecutions in the early '80's of the last century. It is estimated that in 1880 there were about a quarter of a million Jews in the United States. An estimate of the present number is about 2,000,000.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, natural increase and immigration have produced an addition of about one and three-quarter millions in three decades. I think it is fair to assume that of the total number of Jews here, nearly one-half are in Greater New York. This fact has an important bearing on their status as an industrial factor.

The immigrant Jewish population which has arrived here during the past three decades has come from Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Roumania, the greater part from the first mentioned country. A considerable proportion from Austria-Hungary comes from the Polish section of the empire, Galicia. The Galician Jews have emigrated for economic reasons chiefly. Restrictive laws have forced the Roumanian Jews here.

How does the immigrant Jew adjust himself to the industrial conditions in the United States? He is frequently unskilled; he does not know the language of this country; the political, social, economic or religious situation in his native land has made the earning of a livelihood there difficult; he is ready to work here, but must go through experiences of hardship before he becomes settled steadily in a regular occupation. He may have been a tradesman (*Handelsmann*) in the "Old Country," but he must undertake some other occupation here, because he is a greenhorn—"greener" he is collo-

<sup>1</sup> According to the American Jewish Year Book for 1908-09 there were estimated to be 230,257 Jews in the United States in 1880, and 1,777,185 in 1907. The latter is a conservative estimate, counting as it does, but 905,000 for the whole State of New York, whereas there are probably quite that number in the City of Greater New York.

quially called—and he could not pursue the tradesman's business even if he had capital. He might become a peddler, and he frequently does, as we shall see.

Of 225 heads of families in a block of the lower East Side of New York, in reference to whom I have obtained facts as to their present and former occupations, 81, or about one-third, retained the same vocation as abroad. It is noteworthy that the largest proportion in any one occupation before coming here were tradesmen, viz., 66 out of the 225, or about 30 per cent. This is but natural, since Jews were forbidden in former centuries to enter many occupations and restricted in others, so that they have become middlemen and merchants in the Russian, Galician and Roumanian provinces.

The following specimen list showing the former and the present occupations of fifty of the 225 heads of families, picked out at random, will give some idea of the individual changes that have taken place from one occupation to another. The average residence in this country of the heads of the families was about seven years.

Present Occupation.	Former Occupation.
Grocer .....	Grocer.
Painter .....	Tradesman.
Scarfmaker .....	Scarfmaker.
Tailor .....	Tailor.
Upholsterer .....	Shoemaker.
Peddler .....	Peddler.
Presser .....	Teacher.
Cloak operator .....	Shoemaker.
Cloak tailor .....	Cloak tailor.
Coal agent .....	Horse dealer.
Cloak presser .....	Tradesman.
Ladies' tailor .....	Ladies' tailor.
Ladies' waist operator .....	Storekeeper.
Fish cleaner .....	Fish dealer.
Butcher .....	Butcher.
Peddler .....	Tradesman.
Peddler .....	Factory worker.
Skirt operator .....	Tradesman.
Peddler .....	Saloonkeeper.
Baker .....	Tradesman.
Barber .....	Barber.
Storekeeper .....	Peddler.
Mattress maker .....	Wine merchant.
Mattress maker .....	Tradesman.

Present Occupation.	Former Occupation.
Peddler .....	Tradesman.
Cloak presser .....	Tailor.
Tailor .....	Tailor.
Scarfmaker .....	Tradesman.
Laborer .....	Tradesman.
Presser .....	Storekeeper.
Painter .....	Painter.
Salesman .....	Real estate dealer.
Jeweler .....	Jeweler.
Janitor and tailor .....	Tailor.
Peddler .....	Baker.
Peddler .....	Grocer.
Peddler .....	Storekeeper.
Egg candler .....	Egg candler.
Tailor .....	Tailor.
Peddler .....	Tradesman.
Saddler .....	Saddler.
Painter .....	Painter.
Expressman .....	Tradesman.
Ladies' tailor .....	Ladies' tailor.
Cloak presser .....	Shop foreman.
Presser .....	Factory laborer.
Tailor .....	Tailor.
Egg candler .....	Egg candler.
Driver .....	Laborer.
Egg candler .....	Egg candler.

We see that one tradesman became a painter, another a presser, a third a baker; a teacher became a presser; a wine merchant a mattress maker, and so on.

It should be understood that even when the occupations are the same in the new country as in the old, the conditions of work are so different as to require considerable readjustment. Frequently it is easier to take up some other vocation where less skill is required, than endeavor to compete with the expert workmen of a particular trade here.

Among the occupations which the men pursue in this country, the needle industries claim the largest number, because, with the organization and the division of labor in these industries, one can easily acquire the skill necessary to enter one of the sub-divisions of the trade and thus soon after landing can make at least sufficient to keep the family from the direst need, or can start saving sufficient to bring over those who have been left behind. Con-

sequently, we find that out of a total of 333 heads of families (which include the 225 already adverted to) there were 112 in the needle industries, that is to say, about one-third. These were divided as follows: 40 tailors, 32 operators, 27 pressers and 13 finishers. Then there were 46 peddlers. Men can be set up as peddlers with a small capital and little or no skill, and they can sell to people who understand them where immigrant Jewish communities have settled. In the list of 333 the following other occupations were represented in fairly good numbers: 16 painters, 11 scarfmakers, 10 carpenters, 9 bakers, 4 tinsmiths, 3 jewelers, 3 blacksmiths, 3 locksmiths and 3 saddlers. Some of the men were equipped with the necessary skill for these trades before they came here. Others acquired the skill here, as in the case of some of the painters.

Referring to the predominance of workers in the needle industries, I have had in mind large manufacturing centers, such as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Sometimes a mass of Jewish immigrants may be found in some other industry. In an article in *Charities and the Commons*, for January 2, 1909, Miss Anna Reed, describing Jewish immigrants of two blocks in Pittsburg, pointed out: "The stogy industry and peddling are predominant; of those who have become stogy makers, four were students, two grocers, one was a peddler, one a tailor, one a lumber trader, one a merchant, and another a butcher." One interesting result deduced was that the number of peddlers was reduced in numbers, comparing the figures on first arrival here with those of the present time.

In the New York City block which I investigated, I concluded that the average family income was about \$600 a year. This was before the period of hard times came pressing down so severely. These incomes were made up of the earnings of the head of the family and of other members, as well as of lodgers' payments. The latter item is explained by the fact that poor families frequently add to their incomes by taking in one or more lodgers. The most pressing item of expenditure for these families was rent. This averaged about \$14.00 a month for a three-room apartment, which is \$168.00 a year, nearly 30 per cent of the average income.

Some notion of the family incomes may be had from a few illustrations. I first quote instances in which the head of the family had an especially low wage.

The father, sixty years of age, had been in this country four

years. He earned from \$3.00 to \$6.00 a week as a finisher. Work was slack during three months. His income was calculated to be \$175 a year. A daughter of eighteen years, a finisher on cloaks, earned \$6.00 a week, or \$250 a year. A son of sixteen was an errand boy, earning between \$2.50 and \$3.00 a week, or \$125 a year. The total family income was therefore estimated to be about \$550.

In another instance, the head of the family, aged forty-seven, in this country over eighteen years, earned \$125 a year as an operator. His wife conducted an employment bureau, netting \$200 a year. A son of twenty-one earned \$350 as a shipping clerk, a daughter of nineteen \$250, working at children's jackets, another daughter of fifteen \$200, as an office clerk. There were three other children between five and thirteen years of age. We have, therefore, a family of eight, with a total annual income of \$1,125.

A deserted woman of thirty-four earned \$150 a year as a pants finisher. She was paid from 5 cents to 5½ cents a pair, and finished a dozen pairs a day, thus earning about 65 cents per day. The income for the year was not higher because there was a slack season. The woman supported a daughter of eleven. An additional means of income was the lodging of a cousin, a girl of seventeen, a dressmaker, earning \$325 a year, who paid \$3.00 a month as a lodger. It is quite possible that, owing to the slender income of the woman, she was helped by her cousin. It is such factors that often aid in families without being counted in a statistical calculation.

At the other end of the economic line may be found those whose incomes are judged to be fully \$1,000. A tradesman in Galicia, forty-two years of age, who came to this country eight years ago, became a peddler of furnishing goods. Besides the stock at his house, he kept a store with a partner in the neighborhood. When asked why he remained in this locality, rather than move to better quarters, he said he had an established trade there.

One who came from Russia sixteen years ago, where he had been a tinsmith, now keeps a prosperous butcher shop on Orchard street, where he lives with a wife and three children, the oldest of whom, sixteen years of age, goes to the City College. His rental was \$89.00 a month, \$12.00 being estimated for his rooms and \$77.00 for the store. His success in business may be judged by his connection with a construction company in East New York for building and booming real estate.

An immigrant from Roumania, six and a half years ago, forty-three years of age, became a grocery salesman, earning \$1,250 per year. His family of eight live in a five-room apartment whose rent is \$21.00 a month. His oldest son of twenty-one earned \$450 a year as a stock clerk and the next oldest child, a daughter of nineteen, \$400 working at silk waists. The total family income was estimated to be \$2,100 per annum.

We thus see poor and well-to-do living side by side, the former feeling unable to move from a crowded district, because they must be within walking distance of their work, the latter often unwilling because they have an established trade as shop keepers. However, from these latter there is a constant shifting to other districts.

There is a growing diversity of occupations. It has been indicated that the raw immigrant when he first arrives here often becomes either a worker in the needle industries, or a peddler, and the new arrivals constantly fill the gaps left open as the more energetic and better equipped rise to superintending or employing positions.

The sons do not follow in the footsteps of the fathers. They become clerks, salesmen and professional men. They add to the ranks of the teachers, lawyers, physicians and dentists. They are becoming prosperous business men.

The daughters, too, go to work, in many instances, to eke out the family income. The immigrant girls enter the shops and factories, the girls born on American soil go into offices as clerks, bookkeepers and stenographers, or they enter stores as saleswomen, buyers and the like, or they become milliners and dressmakers.

It is true that the Jewish immigrant does not become a street laborer, a railroad worker, or a miner, as is the case with the Italian or Slav immigrant. But he does fill other economic wants. Some evidence of this is shown in the record of the Industrial Removal Office, whose business it is to place Jewish immigrants, particularly from New York City, in other sections of the country. The report of this office for 1907 has a detailed account as to occupation for 4,500 wage earners, out of a total of 7,586 persons sent out during that year. There were 546 wood-workers, such as carpenters, cabinetmakers and wheelwrights; 350 metal workers, such as iron, brass and copper workers, tinsmiths and blacksmiths; 372 in the building trades, such as painters, plumbers, locksmiths and brick-

layers; 48 in the printing trade; 888 in the needle industries; 265 in the leather trade; 45 tobacco workers. There were also 87 in manufacturing skilled trades of various sorts; 68 in non-manufacturing skilled trades; 32 farmers; 157 dealers; 101 office and professional help; 50 peddlers, and 1,523 unskilled laborers.

The Industrial Removal Office has established a chain of agencies in a large number of towns and cities throughout the Union, and year by year it helps to place men in occupations where their chances of economic success seem to be better than in the seaboard cities.

Another movement towards distribution and diversification is represented by the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, with headquarters in New York City, and the Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society of America, with headquarters in Chicago, the one helping men to become farmers east and the other west of the Mississippi. The former organization has ascertained the existence of 2,409 Jewish farmers occupying 2,161 farms in the United States. Of these, the largest numbers are distributed as follows: 684 farmers in New York State, 500 in New Jersey, 461 in Connecticut, 204 in North Dakota and 126 in Massachusetts. Mr. L. G. Robinson, manager of the first-named society, is of the opinion that there are considerably more Jewish farmers than his records show and would not be surprised if the number were twice as great. It should be explained that some of the farmers must depend upon some other occupation to make up their incomes.

The Baron de Hirsch Fund stimulates and supports various activities for trade and technical development, and local Jewish organizations in several cities are likewise engaged. As a result, schools for skilled trades have been established, and agricultural and industrial enterprises have been furthered, all making for a greater diversity of occupation among the Jewish population.

Hundreds of thousands of the Jewish immigrant population, then, are molding themselves into the American nation, the first generation working in clothing, cloak and cap factories, others as peddlers and mechanics, the more sophisticated portion going into real estate and manufacturing and employing on a large scale; a younger generation entering into a variety of businesses and professions. We see them as teachers in schools and colleges, as merchants and manufacturers, as civil service employees, as workers in

stores and in mechanical trades. We see them on isolated farms of the far west, making homes for themselves, as well as on the lands of the east. We see them all over the country in cities, big and little, getting a foothold, performing some useful, economic purpose. We see them a pushing, growing, thriving element—the poor, low-earning, struggling along on incomes of \$10.00 a week or less for the entire family; the better-to-do with higher salaries; professional men with comfortable incomes; and wealthy manufacturers, merchants and bankers, having incomes running into the tens of thousands. Here we have all the elements of a vigorous, progressive people.